

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

BRITISH INFORMATION SERVICES

OBJECTS:

1. To provide for readers at home and abroad information concerning the life and thought of the British Churches in wartime.
2. To elucidate by news and quotations the spiritual issues at stake in the war.

An Agency of the British Government
50 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA, NEW YORK, N. Y.

Number 171

FEBRUARY 11th, 1943

THE VOICE OF FREEDOM IN HUNGARY

We recently printed a remarkable criticism of German policy from the pen of an Italian philosopher. This week there comes evidence that in Hungary also there is an unwillingness to accept the Nazi ideology.

In a recent speech at Budapest the Primate of Hungary, Cardinal Seredi, said "human freedom, according to the teaching of the Church, belongs to the most valuable of the rights of men. Human freedom can only be limited by the moral law—therefore the Church fights against any kind of enslavement." The Cardinal attacked the hostage system because, according to natural law, no responsibility for misdeeds must be laid at the door of those who have not taken any part in the wrongful action. Speaking with great emphasis, he proclaimed "that the Church must recognise and defend not only the freedom of individuals, but also the freedom of States." He concluded with these words: "We have dealt openly with the laws of Christ which defend human freedom without reference to race, nation, birth or possessions, because we ourselves must recognise and care for the rights of our fellow men to freedom—freedom to live, to retain bodily security, freedom to keep their possessions and to move about, freedom to keep their honour and to fulfil their religious obligations. We desire that States should take care for the freedom of their citizens as also for the freedom of other States.

"We desire this not only because we do not want to give any occasion for men and States whose rights and liberties have been injured, and who therefore are naturally embittered, to take the line of vengeance (which mostly leads to the suffering of the innocent), but most of all because it is the will of God that men and States, like the Church, should

recognise both in principle and in action the importance of that freedom which God Himself has bestowed on both men and nations."

In what is apparently a different statement the Cardinal dealt fully with the subject

"Human Freedom in Canonical Law." This speech contained an attack on racial philosophy. It included the following passage:—

"We Magyars have now and then been called a master race. We are not, nor do we want to be one. But neither do we want to recognise another people as master race. There are no master races in the world, but only servants of God and the prey of the Devil. The service of God liberates, while service of demoniacal powers enchains. There are no inferior nations—the Star of the Epiphany shines on all nations. In my capacity as a man baptised, confirmed and ordained, I testify before my country and the world to the eternal truth. Whosoever fails to recognise that we are all children of one Heavenly Father, that we are in every respect of equal right at the gates of the realm of eternity, and that therefore we must be free, is a tool or undisguised emissary of the realm of darkness.

"Considering all the attempts by the Church I represent to codify its interpretation of society, the spirit of the Church knows no discrimination of race, citizenship, nationality, birth or wealth. The Catholic Church and my Order (the Cardinal is a Benedictine) have always rejected this as un-Christian, inhuman and un rational. And we wish to become once more Christians, human beings and rational, and to remain so.

"There is only one scale of value, namely, personal and moral character. There is no such thing as character of a people (*Volkish*), far less superiority of a people. A

Hungarian who believes such nonsense ought to blush with shame at having forgotten to which people he belongs, and withdraw to his chamber and with the help of God regain Hungarian reason by reading the Gospel and the history of his country."

The Cardinal concluded: "We demand the protection of our State for all who are menaced on account of their beliefs (*Gesinnung*) or their race. Hungary must remain a State based on her own justice. She must not bow to alien injustice."

ATTACK ON THE CHURCH BY NAZI RULER OF HOLLAND

Reichskommissar Arthur Seyss-Inquart, the German Commissioner in Holland, has attacked the Church in Holland for having protested against seventeen death sentences passed on Dutchmen accused by a German court-martial of preparing and distributing "inciting pamphlets aimed against the German occupying force."

Replying to a speech by Anton Mussert, the Dutch Nazi leader, on the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the Dutch National-Socialist Party, Seyss-Inquart said: "A short time ago, the Church in Holland sent a letter to the Commander of the occupying troops and to me, protesting against several death sentences which were recently passed. To this I can only say that it is intolerable that at a time when our men are fighting with iron resolution on the Eastern front, there are organisations whose aim it is to endanger the safety of the territory in their rear. Who does that is inevitably doomed. We must be hard and must become harder still against the enemy on the field of battle. This is our duty, perhaps difficult for a human being, but a sacred duty. We do this duty by destroying our enemies. Moreover, I think that the Churches really ought to be able to understand the significance of this struggle. All denominations can practise their faith under National-Socialist occupation to the full and are even able to express their point of view regarding the measures of the Occupying Authority. Moreover, I believe that they are under a moral obligation at least not to hinder the prosecution of this struggle."

CONTINUED RESISTANCE OF DANISH CLERGY

An article in a Nazi-dominated Danish paper (*Kritisk Ugerevue*, December 24th, 1942) shows that Danish clergy are bearing their share in the movement of spiritual resistance. The article is written in a mock-

ing and ironic spirit but provides unmistakable evidence as to the attitude of at least many of the Danish clergy. We quote extracts from the article.

"At Christmastime we are told that we must forget thoughts of enmity. If we enter a church we shall hear different views. The priests will say some monstrous things when they speak with a staggering authority about world affairs. They will probably do it with a completely quiet conscience, but most people will think that they have no right to pose as the judges of individuals and States. They speak indeed of this terrible war, but if you listen carefully you hear that war is particularly terrible when the Germans fire their cannons. If, on the other hand, the English and their allies do so, you get the impression that this war of Churchill is a joyous war, which has as its object the setting up of the kingdom of God on earth. What an explanation of the Gospel message: Peace on earth to men of goodwill! You can have peace indeed, but only the peace which follows the victory of the Western Powers.

"Everything will go all right if only the English win.

"Simple souls are lifted up with the Christmas spirit when they listen to the seductive words of Canterbury. . . . There you have the fruits of the Gospel in our modern Denmark! You can hardly dare to call yourself a Christian if you are convinced that the one war which you will fight is that against Communism! Denmark is at war, civil war. People say they are filled with a righteous anger. We know well enough the mocking smile and the words of triumph with which the London radio has announced that so many thousands have been massacred on the Eastern front.

"What do they make of the Christmas Gospel? Does it really touch their hearts? No, they desire death and hell for all those who are not of their opinion.

"There are others who wait peacefully, suffering with those who are delivering us from the Red peril. They think in silence of those who have given their lives for this holy cause."

One of the features of Danish resistance is a strong insistence by clergy and religious leaders on the right of the Church to have an opinion in political and civic affairs. Thus a Danish clergyman, writing in *Nationaltidende*, "considers it to be wrong when many people, as is the case in Denmark, assert that Christianity and politics have nothing in common with each other; to

separate Christianity and politics means accelerating the work of the Devil. When faith is ignored, the Devil rules and politics become devilry. If politics are not saturated with Christianity, free spiritual life stagnates, justice becomes brute force, the State makes itself divine and claims the right of being worshipped as God, individuality is liquidated and becomes mass membership."

Another clergyman, writing in the organ of the Danish Y.M.C.A. recently, said:—

"During the general depression the Danish Y.M.C.A. was also tempted to preach conversion and faith only. That is what suits any rulers best. Marxists eagerly stress that religion is a private matter, and other quarters say the Church must not meddle in politics. But the Church must and shall meddle in politics.

"Fearlessly and enthusiastically the Danish Y.M.C.A. will support the view that Yes means Yes, that promises are to be kept and justice to be shown to man and woman, Jew and Scandinavian, regardless of all social and racial differences. It depends upon the rulers how politics shall be interpreted. Will they speak truth, keep promises, treat all alike, and let justice and not brute force rule? If not, the Danish Y.M.C.A. and the entire Christian Youth movement may become opposed to the Government before any other Youth movement. But the others will follow, and our present Government must understand this."

INTERESTING WARTIME DEVELOPMENT IN MANCHESTER CATHEDRAL

An attractive booklet has been published by the Dean and Canons of Manchester Cathedral, entitled "Prayers for the United Nations." In a foreword the Dean, Dr. Garfield Williams, explains that at the beginning of the war they decided to make Manchester Cathedral a "power-house of prayer," and that their prayer, "as it was related to the multitudinous needs of war, should never depart from the spirit of the Lord's Prayer." They started a daily intercession service in the famous chapel of the Manchester Regiment. The service, which is quite short, makes a special effort "in realization of the presence of God and directed to the hallowing of His Name, the coming of His Kingdom, and the knowledge and doing of His Will, and then goes on to directed intercession related to the practical needs of the individual and the nations in time of war."

The Dean explains that the famous chapel of the Manchester Regiment has been blown to pieces by enemy action. For a time the Cathedral was a shambles—the East End destroyed, the organs smashed. The intercessions, however, never ceased, but were held in an adjoining church. Now part of the Cathedral is habitable again. "It is axiomatic," says the Dean, "that there is no chance whatever of the United Nations being used to build up a better world unless they learn to pray for one another."

The book of Prayers for which Canon Peter Green is largely responsible, is attractively printed and covers all the needs of war. It provides special prayers for individual countries among the United Nations, for the Jews, for the oppressed nations of Europe, for native populations in war zones, and for the various groups of wartime sufferers. The spiritual needs of Italy and Germany are not forgotten.

"THE PADRE'S HOUR"

Interesting Religious Experiment in Scottish Division

The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland recently visited a Scottish Division on the invitation of the Divisional Commander who had decided to inaugurate a period of one hour's religious instruction per week for all his officers and men.

The first meeting of the tour took place on a Saturday morning when, under the chairmanship of the Divisional Commander, the Moderator and the Bishop of the diocese addressed all officers. On the following day the Moderator preached at six Church Parade services conducted by Chaplains of the Division, and in the evening he addressed several hundred officers and men in a cantine at Divisional Headquarters.

On the Monday the visit was extended to all the remaining Divisional troops, and short addresses were given at a number of central points.

The Moderator was received most cordially wherever he went, and his sermons and addresses constituted a splendid preparation for the Religious Instruction lessons, known as The Padre's Hour, which began within the next few days.

For these lessons the men are divided into groups which are dictated by a variety of circumstances, and the numbers vary from a score to over a hundred in each group. The Padre's Hour is part of the working day. It opens with a talk by the Chaplain from a

syllabus prepared by the S.C.F. of the Division, and questions and discussions follow.

For the first course of ten lessons the subjects are as follows:—I. What is man? II. What do we know about God? III. What is the Bible? IV. What is in the Bible? V. What was Our Lord like, and how did He live? VI. What did Jesus teach? VII. Why did Jesus die? VIII. How is Our Lord's work continued? IX. If a man die, shall he live again? X. What does it mean to be a Christian? It is anticipated that this course will be completed in about fifteen weeks.

While there are occasions when questions are few and slow to come, most Chaplains report keen questioning and obvious interest among all ranks. Perhaps the best way in which to show the variety and range of the questions asked and the degree of religious knowledge which they reveal is to quote a few:—(1) Why is God always represented as male? (2) Jesus Christ led His followers safely over the Red Sea and then caused the waters to drown the Egyptians. Was this a Christian action? (3) How do you justify the ownership of slum property by the Church? (4) If the scientists were to succeed in creating life, where would the Church's teaching stand?

Few of the questions asked are wholly irrelevant to the lesson. Social and economic matters take their natural place in discussions, and in only a few instances has there been a tendency to over-emphasise them. Most Chaplains report that they have had no frivolous or ill-natured questions.

The general outlook is suggested by the phrase preceding many questions—“Without disrespect to the Church . . .”, and by the common response after a question has been answered, “Thank you, sir. I didn't know that before.”

There is extremely little real hostility to the Church. The commonest attitude might be

accurately described as disappointment or impatience.

Religious discussion is being continued in billets, canteens, offices, and workshops for hours and days after the lessons, and so produces new questions for the next Padre's Hour. An interest in the things of the mind and the spirit is being aroused and will grow, and inevitably spiritual results are emerging.

FRENCH ROVERS CARRY ON

The monthly magazine of a Rover Scout movement in the Protestant Church of France publishes some interesting material in the September/October number of its magazine *L'Equipe*. Much of the magazine is devoted to the practical services which the Rovers can render in such matters as cutting wood and generally bringing succour to the cold and hungry, particularly to the refugees. There is a full programme for the training of leaders, including provision for physical, intellectual and spiritual training. Under the last head are included study circles on various books of the Bible, notably the Epistle of St. James and the minor prophets.

Several pages are devoted to an objective résumé of Rosenberg's book, “The Myth of the 20th Century.” At first it might seem that the magazine was lending itself to the circulation of enemy propaganda. In view of the rest of the text, however, it is fairly clear that the object of printing this résumé is something quite different. In the summary of Rosenberg's book is a complete exposition of the myth of German racial superiority, and there can be little doubt that when this is read by any patriotic young Frenchman the effect will be to stir him up in exactly the opposite direction. At the same time the Vichy Government cannot easily protest, as on the face of it the printing of the article might seem in line with the policy of collaboration.